

# BARTHOLDI'S GREAT STATUE.

## AN ENGLISH VIEW OF ITS ART VALUE—CONSTRUCTION DETAILS.

*From the London Daily News, July 3.*

To-morrow M. Jules Ferry will solemnly hand over to the United States Minister in Paris the colossal statue of Liberty for the Bay of New-York on which the French have been at work for the past eight years. It is out and away the largest statue of modern times. The Colossus of Rhodes, as will be presently seen, was nothing to it; it could carry the "Bavaria" or the "Hermann" in its arms. It towers to the skies from the factory yard of the Rue de Chazelles, and the view from its coronet sweeps clear of the six-story houses, and right beyond the walls of Paris. It is to stand on Bedloe's Island, in the Bay of New-York, and is to bear in its hand a torch lighted by electricity, which is to symbolize "Liberty enlightening the world."

The statue has had all sorts of vicissitudes. Its conception is due to the great French sculptor, Bartholdi, who has a passion for working on the colossal scale; but he and a few faithful friends had no little difficulty in persuading the public of two hemispheres that they were in want of this work. A Franco-American committee was formed in France with very influential names—M. Laboulaye, M. Oscar de Lafayette, M. de Rochambeau, M. Paul de Rémusat, M. Waddington, &c.—and the Franco-American committee duly issued its proposals for subscriptions in France and in the United States. They were put in a very seductive form—the Republic of France was to make this pretty gift to her elder sister of America. Everybody said it would be a good thing, but few put down the money. However, by dint of vigorous beating of the big drum on platform and press, by concerts and lectures and balls and fancy fairs, as well as by generous donations, the money was got together; and the statue of Liberty now stands finished in its Paris workshop, the most extraordinary work of its kind of all time.

The moment after the presentation the workmen will begin to take it to pieces for transport to America, where it will be riveted together again to stand for eternity. The dimensions are almost ludicrously large. The figure alone in sheer height, clear of all reckoning for the coronet, stands 105 feet; the extreme length from the sole of the foot to the end of the torch in the outstretched hand is 137 feet 9 inches; the pedestal of granite will be 83 feet high, and the two together give a grand total of 220 feet for the entire work. The monument of Fish-street hill, the loftiest isolated column in the world, is but 202 feet high; while the far famed Colossus of Rhodes stood only about 140 feet without his stockings. The work has been going on all these years, slowly but surely, at the copper foundry of Mondin et Cie., near the Parc Monceau, in a great workshop built specially for it. The further the copper-smiths advanced with their task the more lilliputian they became in relation to it. What were men, for instance, or the children of men in that awful eye measuring 30 inches from corner to corner! A 6-foot man standing on the level of the lips only just reached the eyebrow. While they were working on the crown of her head, they seemed to be making a huge sugar cauldron; and they jumped with ease in and out the tip of the nose. Fifteen people might sit round the flame of the torch, and they would reach that elevation by a spiral staircase within the outstretched arm.

The details of the construction are hardly less curious. Something light was wanted for transport to the other side of the globe, and something strong as well, to enable the statue to resist the wear and tear of the elements, for at Bedloe it will stand in a very exposed place. It was decided therefore to make it of plates of very thin copper—only an eighth of an inch thick—forming an inner and an outer skin about a foot apart, and to fill the space between them with sand, especially toward the base, so as to give the statue the requisite solidity. The colossal statues of the past were either of solid metal, or were filled up with masonry or woodwork. It was impossible to adopt that plan in the present instance; the cost of the metal would have been too great, and the difficulty of transporting insuperable. As it is, the small plates can be easily unriveted, packed on board ship, and riveted together again when they reach their destination. The sand can be as easily poured in or drawn off for repairs for any particular part. The two skins are to be kept in their places by a gigantic skeleton framework in iron, running four-square from the basement to the very crown of the head, exactly like the framework of a lift, and meant to serve that additional purpose when the statue reaches its destination. This solid iron frame is to be carried up into the extended arm, which has all along presented a mechanical problem of peculiar difficulty, its leverage with the weight of the torch being very great indeed. The framework, therefore, runs down almost to the centre of the body and well below the centre of gravity. Some people—and among them Mr. Story, the great American sculptor—think the statue will never stand, and that the winds and waves will play havoc with it. It is not solid enough, and never can be with its epidermis of mere copper and sand. If it could not be in solid metal like the older works, it might have been in masonry or wood covered with copper plates. But this is a question for engineers rather than for artists, and the engineers are quite convinced that "Liberty" will resist the Atlantic storms.

A word should be said about the artistic merit of the statue, and this, in spite of its size, is very considerable. Bartholdi is used to working on a large scale, and he knows his craft. It is impossible, perhaps, in our day to make anything quite dignified of such a subject. The figure must pose, and pose theatrically; and some people have found fault with the stride and the gesture. But the general merit is incontestable. The drapery is both massive and fine; some parts, where the sleeve falls under the right arm for instance, are as delicate and silky in effect as if they had been wrought with a fine chisel on the smallest scale, and in others the folds lie in great imposing masses. The face again, while classic in general treatment, is not without expression. The most objectionable thing perhaps is the coronet branching out into star rays, each of which is to be a point of electric illumination for the universe, or at any rate for New-York Bay.